

SOCIAL ACTION

SEPTEMBER 1951

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INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL ORDER

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Preface

Planning

The report of the National Planning Commission is out. The Commission was official, but its report is not. The Government is not committed to the recommendations of the Commission ; on the contrary, it has invited criticisms and suggestions. Politicians and economists readily responded to the invitation, criticised data and conclusions, and recommended changes of emphasis on the various sectors of the national economy.

Our Stand

The Indian Institute of Social Order could not but feel deeply interested in the recommendations of the Planning Commission. Their attention was, however, particularly attracted by some of the last measures proposed in the Report and taken almost verbatim from a sub-committee which presented its conclusions some months ago. These measures have a moral and social importance which escapes nobody ; they relate to the population policy adumbrated in both reports and advocate State propaganda in favour of sterilisation and birth-control on medical, economic or social

grounds. Such measures call for study, challenge and condemnation. Millions of religious-minded people in India will be grieved at official measures which offend their conviction and conscience, and they could not in good faith support any party programme or any representative advocating such measures. The problem is treated in a concise manner in the various essays of this issue.

The Problem

The poverty of the Indian masses is proverbial and their number raises the question of remedying the situation. What do available statistics reveal? What bearing have numbers and conditions on production and consumption? In particular, what are the prospects of future food production in the country? Besides food, more generally besides economic factors, what are the elements that must be taken into account when discussing a population policy? These supply the data of the problem which is to be faced and solved.

Ends and Means

Since the problem is a human problem, it must be solved by means which are consonant with man's moral nature and with God's moral law. It would be intolerable to pursue rightful aims with means that are wrong; Gandhiji, the Congress Party, the Government of India have repeatedly insisted on the purity of means in pursuing national purposes. Catholics can only approve of such determination, and it is with a like conviction that, whatever the population problem may be, they will oppose any solution that would be against moral and divine law. Their condemnation of artificial birth-control and sterilisation is with them a matter of conviction, and is part and parcel of their reading of the moral law binding man's conscience.

Gandhiji's View

They also confidently appeal to the teachings of the Father of the Nation who, time and again, insisted on con-

tinence in and out of marriage as a duty for the individual and a source of strength for the nation. It would ill-behave anybody who calls himself his disciple to propose measures he severely condemned as a national leader, and to admit a defeatist attitude which he steadfastly refused to entertain. Against his opinion, the views of outsiders who deplore Asian over-population or of economists who fail to see any but economic factors should not be allowed to prevail.

Perils

Moreover, medical opinion is not slow in singling out the dangers attending the use of contraceptives, and all students of human nature know the damage to public opinion, the spread of abortions and other crimes, the perils of promiscuity which would attend the official patronage accorded to contraceptives and sterilisation. Even on economic grounds, the matter of fixing in advance the optimum population is very arduous and complex, and the data available for India are insufficient for any scientific solution of this problem, which moreover does not only concern food, clothing and shelter, but national, cultural and religious values.

Such are, in brief, the considerations which have decided the *Indian Institute of Social Order* to devote the present publication to this problem which is of overwhelming importance.

A. L.



The worst punishment of those nations who pervert love—the worst, that is, after the eternal sanctions of the moral law—does not consist in falling birth-rates nor in the deterioration of public health, but in degradation of the national character. The courage to live is lost; the very will to live is weakened, because it has been attacked by a disease more virulent than any physical infection.

Mersch in *Love, Marriage and Chastity*.

The Problem

"Where is the Indian Malthus who will inveigh against the devastating torrent of Indian children?" asks V. Anstey. One can be quoted here: "Is India over-populated? is therefore a question to which only one answer can be given (namely, the affirmative). Judged from any point of view, a check on the growth of population of India is an urgent, practical necessity."¹ Or listen to an American Malthus on Asia: Prof. N. S. Shaler of Harvard has calculated that if a pair of rabbits increase at normal rate they will produce enough to cover the earth and "enough more to go off into space in a column a mile square with the velocity of light." And J. Russell Smith adds: "Substitute 'people of India', 'people of China', or 'people of Europe' for 'rabbits'—and Shaler's statement is true—if you grant a few centuries." He goes on to ask, "Shall we sit still in the prospect of this impending avalanche of Asiatic births?" His solution is birth-control because he is afraid that Asiatics will reduce his standard of living and perhaps chase him out of his home. "Can the West teach Asia to check the human avalanche before it starts?" Again his solution is that the world should be intelligent enough to follow the enlightened countries which practice birth-control. Enlightened by selfishness, to be sure, Mr. Smith! Even such a competent demographer as K. Davis concludes his very able study by saying: "If we look candidly at the probable future we must admit that the demographic situation in . . . India will get worse before it gets better. . . . Strife, famine, and epidemic diseases are an ever-present threat in India . . . In order to avoid a catastrophic rise in mortality, the birth-rate must eventually fall."²

Let us now see the few statistics that space allows and then make up the debit and credit balance. The Indian Union's population today is 357 millions (including tribal

1. Gyan Chand, *Teeming Millions*, p. 323.

2. *The Population of India and Pakistan*, p. 231.

Assam, and excluding the 43·7 lakhs in Jammu and Kashmir). The net reproduction rates have varied little since 1901 : 1·09 to 1·30 in 1941 (compare this with Egypt, 1937 : 1·44 ; U.S.S.R., 1927 : 1·72 ; Japan, 1937 : 1·44 ; all higher than India).

"The crude rate of natural increase, obtained by subtracting the death-rate from the birth-rate, has fluctuated sharply in India because of fluctuations in the death-rate."¹

AVERAGE ANNUAL RATES²

| DECade | BIRTHS | DEATHS | NATURAL INCREASE |
|-----------|--------|--------|------------------|
| 1881-1891 | 48·9 | 41·3 | 7·6 |
| 1891-1901 | 45·8 | 44·4 | 1·4 |
| 1901-1911 | 49·2 | 42·6 | 6·6 |
| 1911-1921 | 48·1 | 47·2 | 0·9 |
| 1921-1931 | 46·4 | 36·3 | 10·1 |
| 1931-1941 | 45·2 | 31·2 | 14·0 |

This table shows a very high birth and death rate. And one of the reasons of the latter is the infant mortality rate which, although it has decreased from 204·2 per thousand in 1911-15 to 161 in 1941-45, is appallingly high (cf. England with death-rate of 12·1 and infantile mortality-rate of 43·0 in 1946). What is considered alarming is the fact that while the birth-rate increases but little, the Indian death-rate decreases far quicker. Davis, using the figures of 1931, holds that the intrinsic or "true" rate of increase is .0099. This means that given the fertility of 1930-31 and the average mortality conditions of 1921-41, the population would eventually grow at the rate of 1 per cent per year. This would lead to a doubling of the population every 70 years!¹² Davis, Raja and Swaroop, by applying logistic projections to the populations data, all conclude that shortly after the year 2000, India's population will be 700 millions.

In 1931 India and Burma had 1·773 million sq. miles ; in 1951 the Union has 1·220 million sq. miles. In 1931-32, according to R. K. Mukherjee,³ the food supply was 60·1 million tons ; in 1947-48, 41·7 million tons ; the area under food

1. Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

3. *Food Planning*, p. 32.

grains in 1931-32, was 259 million acres, in 1946-47, 161·545 million acres.

On the debit side, then, we have a rapidly increasing population—a fact that would matter less if there were enough food and employment for all. In this respect, South and East Asia, South and Central America and Africa are a world problem. "With 60 per cent of the world population, 1·440 million people, they have an average annual income of only \$ 41·00 . . . Daily food consumption averages 2,150 calories, though half of them get less than 2,000 calories . . . Life expectancy is about thirty years, and half of the children born do not reach the age of fifteen years."¹

We must add as regards Indian diets the inadequacy of calories, lack of proper balance, excess of carbohydrates, protein and vitamin deficiency. "If India depends," says Dr. Aykroyd, "entirely on what she herself can produce, a large increase in the production of various foods is necessary to raise the standard to a satisfactory level."

A further danger in the eyes of the anti-populationists is the fear that if Asiatic nations go on increasing at their present rate, they will want to occupy those lands possessed by countries with a low birth-rate. And so "The poor and under-privileged of every land must have the same democratic (oh, blessed word !) freedom of controlling the birth-rate that the privileged on this continent (U.S.A.) enjoy."²

The credit factors are: the decrease in birth-rate, the increase in the number of unmarried females per thousand, aged 10-15, from 481 to 619 per thousand,—further education would raise this figure; the improvement in industrial output: "There is no doubt," says K. Davis, "that industrialization is growing faster than population";³ and we must remember that countries with a much denser population than India (e.g., England) live by industry.

1. "Can the Earth Feed Its Millions", by Dr. Karl Sax, in *United Nations World*, March, 1951.
2. Guy Irving Burch, "Danger! Population Explosion", *Reader's Digest*, Feb. 1951.
3. *Op. cit.*, p. 213.

Nor is the food situation, if looked at from a world standpoint, so very doubtful. There is a very definite increase both in quantity and quality : "the world's population is increasing by 1 per cent, while ability to provide food is growing at the rate of 1½ per cent."¹ Far less labour is required than formerly to provide more food : "One can say that whereas then (1800) one farm family fed itself plus half another family, today one farm family feeds itself plus two other families."² The Food Conference, (Hot Springs, Virginia, 1943) declared its conviction that "the world *can* and should and must be adequately fed." And Prof. Schultz holds that "The nightmare of over-population that oppressed Malthus and his contemporaries no longer troubles our minds."³ What is then needed is a better distribution of the world supply of food.

As regards the steady increase of population, let it be remembered, while nations have died from under-population, population growth has gone with increasing civilization and wealth. Moreover, once a deliberate population restriction policy has been introduced it is well nigh impossible to check it at the desired stage. "The evidence is," says Carr-Saunders, "that, once the small family system has gained hold, it continues to spread,"⁴ and his opinion is shared by many other demographers who hold that the recent attempts of Germany, Italy and France to increase their population were in the last analysis, a failure. Population is not really the direct cause of any social problem except that caused by maladjustment of the population strata itself, e.g., a disproportionate number of old people in relation to the rest of the population, a phenomenon found in a declining population. Nor is it true that "the real enemy of the dove of peace is the stork." India and China faced famine time and time again, but have not taken to imperial conquest, while England, Spain, Portugal, France and Holland

1. A. G. Mezerik, *Pursuit of Plenty*, p. 11.

2. *Food for the World*, p. 178, edit. T. W. Schultz.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 310.

4. *World Population*, p. 326.

have done so while not suffering from population problems. Population pressure is not the cause of infanticide, abortion, and polyandry ; these practices chiefly depend on customs and morality. Peoples with a very low birth-rate have these practices, e.g., serious observers estimate that there are 500,000 abortions a year in U.S., 250,000 a year in France.

Attention has been focussed on the increase in the last two decades, but there is no certainty this rate will continue. Rate of increase in Asia and India has been much slower than that of Europe. Carr-Saunders estimates that the population of Europe rose from 100 to 527·9 millions in the period 1650-1938, in Asia, during the same period, from 330 to 1,177·1 millions—a slower rate of increase. And Davis remarks : "The rate of growth since 1921 (1·2 per cent per year) has not been phenomenal for modern times. The United States' population increased 16 per cent during the decade 1929-30, a rate never yet equalled in India."¹

Before embarking on populationist or anti-populationist policy the question should be considered in its entirety. Very few of the many who speak in favour of population restriction for India do this. They simply take it for granted that there are too many people and that the *only* practical solution is contraception. The question is very complex and over-simplification of the problem is extremely dangerous to the well-being of the nation. Let them study and reflect over the lot of those nations which have embarked on a policy of contraception, and see how they are now struggling for existence. The full results of such policy we have yet to see ; nature takes her revenge slowly, but inevitably. Whether "the glorious gospel of the empty cradle" is the solution to the problem, or whether we endorse this statement of Ungern-Sternberg : "It is time we stop moaning about the twenty million annual new-comers to the human family and began to rejoice instead", the following articles will discuss.

A. Nevett.

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

Artificial Birth Control Morally Wrong and Harmful

It is necessary to stress at the very outset that those who oppose artificial birth-control do not do so because they consider the sexual act as something wrong or shameful in itself. On the contrary, for most of those who are against Birth-Control marriage is a sacrament and the sexual act performed within the married state in a normal manner is actually meritorious. Indeed the relations between the sexes, the marvellous mechanism of sexual reproduction, the combination of the physical element and the spiritual element in love and marriage, give a wonderful idea of the power, the wisdom and the goodness of the Creator. The physical union is paralleled by the moral union between the two, its permanent and inseparable character are reflected in the personality of the child with his double heredity and his need, for many years, for the mutual and loving protection of his parents. Marriage and child-bearing are sacred and beautiful things.

Artificial birth-control by contraceptives or by sterilization, is wrong because it defeats the natural purpose of the sexual act and prevents it from attaining the end for which it is naturally ordained. The natural purpose and result is the procreation of children and the perpetuation of the human race. The vehemence of the sexual appetite and the craving for the satisfaction of the sexual passion is nature's means of ensuring that the race or the species is preserved. It is means to a higher end. The Birth Controllers want to turn the means into an end in itself. It is as if men ate in order to please their palate and not to preserve and maintain life. The appetite for food—hunger and thirst—are also vehement appetites. Yet it would be considered mere animality if men ate for the sake of pleasing their appetite only ; if they for instance, like certain gluttons, vomited what they ate in order to eat more. Yet, Birth Controllers are

asking for something similar. The duties and responsibilities of parenthood for man and woman are so grave and painful that selfish people would easily shirk them. Hence the Creator has ensured the growth of mankind by linking it with a powerful appetite and the joys of love and social union. To take the pleasure and shirk the duty is ethically wrong. Moreover, the sterilization of a healthy person is a physical mutilation which is also cruelly wrong in itself and repugnant to our sense of human dignity.

This does not mean that every time the appetite is stirred, it should be satisfied and that it is the duty of all married people to bring up the largest family possible, indiscriminately and without reference to other factors. The physical fitness of the parents, their economic conditions, the facilities they have for educating suitably their children, should dictate the size of the family. Nature itself has certain means by which she diminishes fertility in individual and races, there are times when conception is unlikely; surgical operations on diseased organs may have to be undergone in order to preserve life and these may cause sterility. These aspects will be exposed elsewhere by an experienced Doctor. But when all this has been conceded, it remains that where family limitation is further desirable, it must be secured by self-control and abstinence and not by contraceptives.

The protagonists of birth-control will admit that a certain degree of self-control and abstinence is essential in the married life. Even the persons who use these artificial devices have to abstain in periods of pregnancy, in times of sickness, in times of absence and separation from one another, in the advancing years of the wife when she is unfit for sexual life while the man retains his full physical vigour. If this is not admitted all pretence of morality and conjugal fidelity must be given up. And this degree of self-control will be practically impossible for people who never exercised self-control in this matter, and have learnt to satisfy their passion with impunity.

Now self-control or the refusal to satisfy our cruder instincts, is essential to individuals and nations in a variety of ways and in a variety of circumstances. We have to overcome our greed, our love of comfort, love of delicate food, our jealousies and anti-social instincts, if society is to function with stability and peace. The unbridled pursuit of personal gain and personal pleasure spells ruin to a nation. Character is formed by personal discipline, in the school of self-denial, by doing the things which are hard and disagreeable. Now the field of sexual desire is the most important, because in some ways, the hardest field for self-conquest. To give way here is to make a surrender that weakens the whole man, relaxes the fibre of his being, breaks the mould of manhood, softens and waters it down if it does not empty it out entirely. Stamina, strength, efficiency, everything that makes for national strength and prosperity are compromised by self-indulgence of this type.

Indeed in the matter of sexual indulgence we are treading on such dangerous ground that if you open the door to one small abuse, there is no knowing what great evils will enter. Or, to change the metaphor, the ground is so slippery and the incline so steep, that if you permit one fall, you may slip down to total destruction. Since the pursuit of pleasure for its own sake is permitted and encouraged by birth-control practice, the door will be opened to wider immorality, to indulgence before marriage and outside marriage. Since children are not wanted, when contraception fails, abortion will be practised. While we glory in our kindness to animals callousness to human life—hidden murder—will keep on growing as indeed it seems to have grown already to a frightening extent. Finally, if pleasure is the end, many people will want to know why they should not seek it even in unnatural ways if that appeals to them. For after all, as Bernard Shaw put it with brutal directness, birth-control devices in marriage mean “mutual masturbation” between husband and wife.

India has a great tradition of family life, a strong sense of unity and attachment to the family circle, and the development of traditional virtues in the family atmosphere. It has enabled Indian society to resist the disruptive force of foreign invasion and foreign domination, and to survive through long centuries of disorder and uncertainty. The practice of birth-control will deal an irreparable blow to the sanctity of family life and the peaceful atmosphere of the home. It will facilitate premarital experiences and will make happy marriages more difficult. In the absence of children or their very small number, divorce and the breakup of the home will be easier. Suspicions regarding conjugal fidelity will rise and persist more easily than ever before. In a word, perfect confidence between husband and wife, between children and parents, will become more difficult and the magnificent traditions of domestic life for which India could be justly proud will suffer gradual deterioration.

Finally, notwithstanding all the promises of the Birth Controllers, their methods will not solve the economic problem. In classes that will have most recourse to it will be well-to-do families anxious to live in greater comfort and leave better fortunes to fewer children. It will be precisely those who can afford to have fairly large families that will cut down the number of children. The unique child or very few children in a family tend always to be pampered and become intensely selfish. The elements best capable of contributing to the prosperity of the nation by intelligence, education, and hard work will gradually diminish in numbers. With a diminishing birth-rate, the proportion of elderly people to younger ones will go on increasing and intellectual and economic progress will inevitably suffer. This is what has been discovered by some very prosperous nations in Europe where birth-control practices were encouraged, particularly in France. Now in most of these countries every effort is being made to increase the birth-rate and special tax exemptions are being given to large families in several countries.

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A certain pressure of population is a wonderful stimulus to activity and effort in any country or people. "Necessity is the mother of invention". Under the challenge of poverty and hunger, all natural resources will be exploited, scientific devices adopted and the production of food and commercial goods pushed forward with energy. The expanding population of the world has been obliged to expand the world's resources to a great extent. We are still in the infancy of scientific invention and in improved methods of food production. There is no limit to what human intelligence and industry can achieve. Now social virtues, capacity for hard work, patience in difficulties, simplicity of habits, unselfishness of character which loves to serve others develop best in the bosom of large families where thrift, hard work, even austerity are essential for survival.

Artificial birth-control is morally wrong, it is harmful to the national character ; it is destructive of the family ; it is a danger to economic progress. It is opposed to the spirit of Indian culture and to the beautiful traditions of family life in India. Therefore the practice of it must be condemned from almost every point of view.

J. D'Souza.



Focus on Food

Unlike animals man has to labour for his food. They have their food readymade, served up by Nature, but man has to work hard so that the resources of Nature may be made fit for human consumption. Therein lies the difference between human beings and brute beasts ; the former can learn to exercise a constantly increasing control over their environment and the latter are unable to put forth any such effort. Indeed, the history of the human race may well be written from the viewpoint of man's control over the resources of Nature so as to win his daily bread. The overall

picture of such a history would throw into focus the essential features of the food problem.

Working for Food

The resources of Nature are fixed, in the sense that there is just so much land, coal, mineral wealth and other raw materials to be found on our earth. The various uses, however, to which land may be put for the purpose of providing man with food are seemingly unlimited thanks to human ingenuity and inventive spirit. Restrictions of climate and geography, which limit the growth of certain food grains and plants to definite areas, have often been overcome, and now cereals grow under "foreign" skies and upon "foreign" soils. Of wheat varieties, and there are thousands, by means of crossing in wheat, new varieties have been produced specially adapted to certain conditions of climate and soil. Science in agriculture has not only increased crop yield, but has also given man mechanical devices which have increased production up to 160 times per man-unit.¹ The mighty flow of unruly rivers, man has harnessed and has diverted to transform arid lands into new areas of plenty ; even the depths of the seas and oceans he has sounded to win new food resources and thus, man is constantly finding new ways and means to add to his food supply. The science of transport has placed the food resources of all the world at man's disposal ; from one corner of the earth to the other, as need arises, he moves his food.

The Pressure of Population upon Nature's Resources.

Can man, despite his inventive genius, still find food for a world population which appears to present a steady rate of increase ? Population prophets have warned us that man is beaten in the race between food production and an increasing population ; today, there are more mouths to feed than food to go round ! Of such prophets, perhaps, the best known is Thomas Robert Malthus, who was ninth

1. *Masses Ouvrieres*, June, 51, p. 83.

wrangler at Cambridge. Making use of this mathematical knowledge, Malthus saw that population if unchecked, would increase in a geometrical ratio, whereas subsistence cannot increase in more than an arithmetical ratio. Hence an addition of 128 workers over the period 2000-2050 would have a total productive value equal to that of only one additional worker of the period 1800-1825. And this despite all the improvements in the method of land cultivation which might have been evolved in 175 years!¹ Whatever the fallacy of Malthus' arithmetical ratio, the essential validity of his principle of population appeared to be supported by the economic Law of Diminishing Returns. That is to say, "when successive doses of capital and labour are applied to land, increasing returns to each dose are first obtained but after a certain point has been reached, diminishing returns to each subsequent dose invariably follow, unless an improvement is made in the methods of agriculture." It is common knowledge that Malthus' population theory did not go unchallenged. It was questioned by Senior, Chalmers and the American economist Carey, who believed in "increasing returns to every human effort," and he had some grounds for this contention by comparing the productiveness of agriculture in 1840 with the miserable output obtained in 1398. Without denying the formal accuracy of the statement of diminishing returns, England of the middle 19th century gave little significance to a tendency which was continuously counteracted by more powerful opposing tendencies. The history of civilisation, in fact, seemed to show that man always rose superior to the tendencies to which Malthus and Ricardo called attention,— "the wish of every individual to ameliorate his own conditions" was taken to be the power which carried civilisation rapidly forward despite the tendency to diminishing returns and all other obstacles. Indeed, "For many decades before the war (World War I), world production according to the best estimate available, increased with remarkable

1. Harold Wright, *Population*, p. 29.

regularity of trend, broken only in minor degree by successive crisis. . . . Most of the estimates available over such a long period measure the production of raw materials and foodstuffs."¹

Deficient Statistics

Unfortunately the whole approach to the food problem in view of India's growing population, is made most unsatisfactory on account of the lack of adequate data. With the result of partition in 1947, followed by the shifting of populations to the extent of nearly 16 million people, the figures and statistics of an Undivided India are already outdated and of very little use for a helpful study of population and food production in the years to come.

Both the *area under cultivation* and the *actual crop yield* are not easy to assess due to the want of reliable statistics. Thus, Prof. C. N. Vakil tells us that in his table on Land Utilisation in Undivided India, "The table covers a total area of 670 million acres, whereas the total geographical area of Undivided India is 1,008 million acres.... The net area actually covered by agricultural statistics is 148 million acres."² This is explained by the absence of agricultural reports from so called "Non-Reporting" areas which formerly made up the Indian Native States, and are now, for the most part, within the Indian Union. Correct estimates of the food producing capacity of the country are rendered still more difficult, because as Mr. T. M. Desai writes, "There are millions of cultivators in the country who undertake farming on a small scale. A major portion of the goods produced is consumed by these cultivators themselves, and it is difficult to have an adequate idea of the total production by a reference to the marketed crop."³ Sir John Russel in his Report on the Working of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, 1937, states that the under-estimation of food production is more than 25 per

1. *World Economic Survey*, League of Nations, 1932-33; p. 68.
2. *Economic Consequences of Divided India*, p. 157.
3. *Food Crisis in India*, *Commerce*, July, 1949.

cent of the total production. Writing about the acreage covered by the Non-Reporting areas, Prof. C. N. Vakil observes, "This is a very important limitation to all interpretations made with reference to the food problem by various authors on the basis of the information given in official forecasts. Unfortunately, students of the food problem have not always realised the significance of this defect. It is not unusual to find responsible persons using this data and comparing them with the requirements of the total population of the country, which leads to pessimistic conclusions."¹ Thus, in a reference to Dr. R. K. Mukherjee's book, "Food Planning for 400 Millions", Prof. C. N. Vakil writes, "To some extent his all too pessimistic estimate of a food deficiency of 12 per cent of the population in a year of normal harvest (page ix, Preface) in relation to Undivided India may be traced to his mistake of matching the requirements of the whole population with incomplete estimates of available supply particularly relating to production."² To what extent such faulty statistics may change the true picture of the country's food situation may be gathered from the fact, that "if this inaccuracy (under-estimate of crop yield) were corrected, the addition to the rice crop in 1947-48 would alone amount to 1.8 million tons, which is about 63 per cent of imported foodstuffs in 1948."³ According to Dr. J. P. Thomas, the agricultural and industrial production of the country far from falling behind the rate of increase of population has more than kept pace with the growing number of people, as shown by the following table used by Prof. C. B. Mamoria :⁴

| PERIOD | POPULATION | AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION | INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION |
|-----------|------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1900-1905 | 100 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| 1905-1910 | 104 | 103.0 | 142.0 |
| 1910-1915 | 107 | 123.5 | 187.0 |
| 1915-1920 | 103 | 124.5 | 255.0 |
| 1920-1925 | 109 | 120.0 | 251.0 |
| 1925-1930 | 113 | 129.0 | 289.0 |

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 168-169.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 169.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 171.

4. *Rural India*, January, 1951, p. 16.

Self-sufficiency in Food ?

The food problem, whether in India or anywhere else in the world, is inevitably bound up with the standard of living. Now a reasonable standard of life implies the consumption of not only cereals, but a very definite quantity of "protective foods", such as, oilseeds, vegetables, fruits, milk and dairy products to give a calorie value of about 2,600. If to these requirements for a reasonable standard of living we add a minimum standard of housing, clothing, education and amusement, the focus on food becomes still more clear. Obviously, no country can produce, economically, all it needs to build up its standard of life, and the ordinary course followed is to produce what it can, on an economic basis, and then through the medium of trade obtain what it does not produce from abroad. The country must decide. Everyone knows that when England "went industrialized", she opted to give all her resources to the manufacture of industrial goods, sell these abroad and buy her food from foreign markets. The wisdom of this policy we need not discuss here. The point is that the resources devoted to the food front are reduced by the same amount we put into the development of non-food supplying goods, whether such goods are produced at home or bought in foreign markets. India is building up her industries, and for some years to come, she will have to import many types of consumer goods and heavy equipment. These demands must necessarily tax her resources, and reduce those which might be devoted to the food-front. But this is not the whole story. The farmers on the food-front, are also consumers, they too are entitled to a reasonable standard of life, and so they will demand a "fair" price for the food they put up on the market, and if that fair price is not forthcoming, it is just possible that they will turn to more profitable commercial crops, such as, cotton or jute and thereby reduce the acreage and yield of cereals. The ideal, of course, is a balanced economy which supplements home production by imports from abroad to secure a reasonable

standard of life. Surely, this is not beyond the competence of our economists and statesmen ?

The *Eastern Economist* (Oct. 21st., 1949) argues that there is certainly not enough agricultural land in India, "to make it possible for self-sufficiency in food, raw jute and raw cotton being achieved simultaneously in the near future."¹ And the same Review (July 13th., 1951) commenting on the Draft Five Year Plan of the Planning Commission, says, "A normal level of food imports of three million tons a year has become an integral part of the food policy now recommended ; but the Planning Commission has calculated that to maintain the existing overall daily per capita availability of 13·67 ozs. in the face of an anticipated increase in the population of 26 million would need an additional production of 6·9 million tons of food grains."² Even though the leeway to be made up, 6·8 million tons, is a steep figure, it is a healthy sign that the Planning Commission admits that self-sufficiency in food is not essential to feed our population. Indeed, today, when the inter-dependence of States has gained universal recognition in every free country, and co-operation between States has been accepted as a condition for survival and is stressed by leading statesmen in this country, the fact that India should import part of her foodstuffs should cause no surprise. That such a policy opens up vast potentialities for the country's manufactures and helps raise the standard of living needs no emphasis ; nor does it mean that the productive capacity of the country, on the agricultural front has reached its limits.

Finding a way out

Elsewhere in this Review the growth of India's population has been examined. Here, in our focus on food in the light of the country's growing population, a few conclusions emerge from this necessarily incomplete survey. *Firstly*,

1. p. 615.

2. p. 52.

our statistics on food production are too incomplete and scanty to furnish us with any reliable foundation upon which to attempt any useful forecast as to the productive capacity of the country. Moreover, New India is not five years old, and not only world tension since World War II, but internal problems of immense magnitude, such as the refugee problem, have tended to set up abnormal conditions which render it extremely difficult and hazardous to predict the future patterns of population and production. *Secondly*, within recent times, to meet the growing seriousness of the food problem, FACTS of improved agricultural output, from various parts of the country, tend to illustrate what our people can accomplish, and how the country's natural resources respond when put to the test. "Experiments all over the Madras State have shown that the yield of irrigated paddy can be increased from 10 to 40 per cent in one year, if 4,000 to 6,000 lbs. of green leaves are puddled into the field just before transplanting."¹ In Uttar Pradesh, Mr. J. K. Kanshik, during 1949-50 obtained from an acre of land a wheat yield of 58 mds. 13 srs. when the ordinary Indian average is only 7 maunds."² The following instances of increased crop yield are taken from India's new and very useful farm Review, *Indian Farming*. In West Bengal, Mr. J. C. Pani during the Kharif season 1949-50 raised 73 maunds and 30 seers of paddy on an acre of land against the Indian average of 12½ maunds.³ In Hapur a potato crop yield of 679 mds. 21 srs. 7 chks. per acre against the Indian average of 72 mds. was the reward of Mr. R. Prakash during 1950.⁴ *Thirdly*, an increased food out-put, which we cannot yet calculate in figures for want of precise data, must necessarily follow the country's effort to stamp out pests and plant diseases, to extend and improve the use of fertilisers, to reclaim waste land and increase agricultural acreage by means of new hydro-electric projects. Insects, pests and

1. *Madras Information*, July, 51, p. 6.
2. *Eastern Economist*, July 6th., p. 10.
3. p. 3.
4. p. 3.

plant disease involve our agricultural production in an annual loss of about Rs. 180 crores.¹ An all-out campaign against such destructive elements is being undertaken by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, but it is still too early for the country to benefit from the findings of the Council. The use of fertilisers and mechanical equipment in agriculture are already yielding increased crop returns in various parts of the country, even though such "aids" to agriculture are still very restricted in use. Unfortunately, a correct assessment of our unused lands for food crops is not yet possible, for as Dr. B. Natarajan writes, "Land Utilization Research is still in a formative stage. . . . An overall assessment of land utilization, involving as it does a comprehensive study of all the aspects of national economy has seldom been made. Literature on the subject, meagre in advanced countries, is almost lacking in India."² While it is not yet possible to give a complete picture of the different new hydro-electric projects for irrigation and power in India, the forecast made by the Central Board of Irrigation as to the increase in the area to be irrigated is certainly optimistic. "The projects that are under construction or investigation," says Leaflet No. 3, "when completed will add over 27 million acres to India's existing 48 millions and will add about 9 million kW. of hydro-electric energy to the existing paltry half million." Hydro-electric power will feature largely in the development of our cottage industries, whose prosperity will both increase the purchasing power of our rural workers and relieve the pressure on the land. The development of animal husbandry, fisheries and poultry will help to increase our food resources and all these sources are yet to be tapped. Fourthly, a balanced economy which supports a reasonable standard of life by means of imports is not only necessary today, but even desirable. This brings the food and population problems on the international plane: the Colombo Plan which forecasts

1. *Our Economic Problem*: Wadia & Merchant, p. 159.
2. *Land Utilisation in the Madras State*, p. 1.

by the end of 1956-57 an additional agricultural production of 3 million tons of food grains, and other international plans aim, in general, at a better flow of goods and services between States. Surely, it is not beyond the powers of our people to devise an economy in which exports will pay for imports ?

Lastly, population problems are dynamic. They arise from the changing productivity of labour, on the one side, and the changes in the number of human beings, on the other. Habits and customs can, and have, changed the ratio of growth of both. But habits and customs rise above economic issues, and these are the " unknowns " which often surprise the dogmatism of population prophets. In a country like ours, in which there are many who have an excessively large share of food, clothing and shelter, and at the same time, there are others who lack the bare necessities of life, can one persuade the people that there is not enough wealth to go around unless there is a reduction in our numbers ? What guarantee is there that a mere reduction in the population of our people will mean more food, clothing, shelter and a better standard of life for all ?

C. C. Clump.



On all the evidence it is clear that Nature's most stupendous act—the reproduction of species — is governed by a vast and complex force of which we know very little, but we do know from the history of dead nations that when men and women seek to sabotage that force by artificial means its vengeance is implacable. By improved social conditions birth-rates fall of their own accord, but by the added use of contraceptives that natural fall will be so aggravated as to cause national extinction.

H. Sutherland in *Control of life*

Gandhiji's Lead

One should not expect from Mahatma Gandhi a systematic treatment of chastity. He was engrossed in the national movement and had to face the ever-changing phases of the struggle. His ideas developed as he grew in experience ; shades and stresses in particular points varied with the practical cases at hand ; circumstances left him little time to develop his views which were laid down in hurried answers to a multitude of correspondents or in articles he had to deliver on fixed dates to the publishers of *Harijan* or *Young India*.

Whilst going through the series of his writings, one is struck with Mahatma's insistence on spiritual values, spiritual outlook and spiritual energy. Most particularly he is unique among national leaders in his advocacy of personal continence as a spring of force and a source of national strength. On occasions, he even appears puritanical in his views, and never feels shy of calling his people to heroic standards. With him there was no defeatism or pessimism, but always an appeal to ideals and an optimism which aroused his people to unsuspected heroism and which was the secret of his success. It is with a like spirit that the country must face the population problem and meet the possible challenge of over-population. Nobody who has imbued his spirit or claims him as a master may deliberately accept the defeatist attitude and ruinous pessimism which are implied in birth-control propaganda. On the contrary, all will benefit from reading over what he said about marriage, birth-control and continence.

* * * * *

As to the purpose of marriage, he wrote as follows :

" When he (man) pondered over the phenomenon of the pleasureableness of sexual union, he discovered that, like every organ of sense, this one of generation had its use and abuse. And he saw that its true function, its right

use was to restrict it to generation. Any other use was ugly, and he saw further that it was fraught with very serious consequences as well to the individual as to the race" (*Harijan*, 4-4-1936). In *Harijan* (14-3-36), he had explained that it was only recently he had come to this stern view of marriage. "All these long years I had regarded the rule of the *Smritis* (i.e., that union between husband and wife was permitted only when the parties really desired to have children) was a counsel of perfection not to be carried out literally and had believed that so long as married couples carried an intercourse by mutual consent but without special regard to the desire for progeny, they were carrying out the purpose of marriage without breaking any positive injunction of the *Smritis* . . .

But the new light in which I viewed the *Smriti* text was a revelation to me. The sole object of sexual intercourse according to the new light was the desire for progeny, never gratification of the sexual instinct. Simple gratification of the instinct would be counted according to this view of marriage as lust. This may appear to be a harsh expression to use for our enjoyment which has hitherto been regarded as innocent and legitimate."

Moralists would not be so severe; quite reasonably they would not consider as sinful the normal use of marriage for the purpose of fostering mutual love, even if they list abstention as a means to spiritual pursuits. Apparently Gandhiji was led to his puritanical view by his own experience which he hastily generalised.

"I can bear ample testimony from my experience and that of many friends. I am not aware of any of us having derived any benefit mental, spiritual or physical. . . . I can clearly recall the fact that this indulgence interfered with my work." (*Harijan*, 4-4-36).

"If a reference to my own married life is not considered irrelevant, I may say that my wife and I tested the real bliss of marriage when we renounced sexual contact, and that, in the heyday of youth. It was then that our com-

panionship blossomed and both of us were enabled to render real service to India and humanity in general. I have written about this in my *Experiments with Truth*. Indeed this self-denial was born out of our great desire for service." (Harijan, 7-7-46).

* * * * *

In his attitude to birth-control propaganda and contraceptives, Gandhiji was definite and adamant. Artificial birth-control is immoral, damaging to the individual and ruinous for the nation. A few texts will suffice.

During Gandhiji's Bengal tour, he answered a question in a workers' meeting in no obscure terms : "Contraceptives are an insult to womanhood. The difference between a prostitute and a woman using contraceptives is only that the former sells her body to several men, and a woman using contraceptives sells it to one man." (Harijan, 5-5-46).

"It is cowardly to refuse to face the consequences of one's acts." (Harijan, 17-4-37).

"Bernard Shaw is reported to have said that coition accompanied by the use of contraceptives was nothing less than sexual masturbation. A moment's reflection would show how accurate the description is." (Harijan, 12-9-36).

"The greatest harm done by the propaganda (for contraceptives) lies in its rejection of the old ideal and substitution in its place of one which, if carried out, must spell the moral and physical extinction of the race. The horror with which ancient literature has regarded the fruitless use of the vital fluid was not a superstition born of ignorance. What shall we say of a husbandman who will sow the finest seed in his possession on stony ground or of the owner of a field who will receive in his field rich with fine soil good seed under conditions that will make it impossible for it to grow ? God has blessed man with seed that has the highest potency and woman with a field richer than the richest earth found anywhere on this globe. Surely it is criminal

folly for man to allow his most precious possession to run to waste. He must guard it with a care greater than he will bestow upon the richest pearls in his possession. And so is the woman guilty of criminal folly who will receive the seed in her life-producing field with the deliberate intention of letting it run to waste. Both he and she will be judged guilty of misuse of the talents given to them and they will be dispossessed of what they have been given. Sex urge is a fine and noble thing. There is nothing to be ashamed of in it. But it is meant only for the act of creation. Any other use of it is a sin against God and humanity. Contraceptives of a kind there were before and there will be hereafter, but the use of them was formerly regarded as sinful. It was reserved for our generation to glorify vice by calling it virtue." (*Harijan*, 28-3-51).

Not only is artificial birth-control immoral and damaging to the individual, it is also, in Gandhiji's view, harmful to the nation. It is "a practice, that in India, if it became general, is bound to ruin the youth of the country.... We need not lessons in the use of contraceptives and helps to our being able to satisfy our animal appetite, but continuous lessons to restrain that appetite, in many cases even to the extent of absolute continence. We need to be taught by precept and example that continence is perfectly possible, and imperatively necessary if we are not to remain mentally and physically weak. We need to be told from the house-tops that if we will not be a nation of manikins, we must conserve and add to the limited vital energy we are daily dissipating." (*Self-Restraint v. Self-Indulgence* p. 35).

"A society that has already become enervated through a variety of causes will become still further enervated by the adoption of artifical methods. Those men therefore who are light-heartedly advocating artifical methods cannot do better than study the subject afresh, stay their injurious activity and popularise *brahmacharya* both for the married and unmarried. That is the only noble and straight method of birth-control." (*Young India*, 12-3-25).



Texts bearing the same lesson could be multiplied *ad infinitum*, but it is equally necessary and more comforting to mention the positive teaching of Gandhiji on continence.

"A moral life without reference to religion is like a house built upon sand. And religion divorced from morality is like sounding brass, good only for making noise and breaking heads. Morality includes truth, *ahimsa* and continence.... Non-violence and continence are again derivable from Truth, which for me is God.... Hence my constant insistence on continence.... I have not the shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith. Work without faith is like an attempt to reach the bottom of a bottomless pit." (*Harijan*, 3-10-36)

"The conquest of lust is the highest endeavour of a man or woman's existence. Without overcoming lust man cannot hope to rule over self. And without rule over self there can be no Swaraj or Ramaraj..... Great causes cannot be served by intellectual equipment alone; they call for spiritual effort or soul-force. Soul-force comes only through God's grace and God's grace never descends upon a man who is a slave to lust. (*Harijan*, 21-11-36)

"I must confess that the observance of the law of continence is impossible without a living faith in God who is living Truth. It is the fashion nowadays to dismiss God from life altogether and insist on the possibility of reaching the highest kind of life without the necessity of a living faith in a living God. I must confess my inability to drive the truth of the law home to those who have no faith in and no need for a Power infinitely higher than themselves. My own experience has led me to the knowledge that fullest life is impossible without an immovable belief in a living Law in obedience to which the whole universe moves. A man without that faith is like a drop thrown out of the ocean bound to perish. Every drop in the ocean shares its majesty and has the honour of giving us the ozone of life." (*Harijan*, 25-4-36)

Without adding to his numberless praises of continence, we may end now quoting the ascetic method which he gives his Hindu disciples and which strongly recalls the method given by Catholic moralists and ascetics. We quote in extenso his short article on the steps to Brahmacharya which he wrote in *Young India*, 20-4-26 : "The first step is the realisation of its necessity.

The next step is gradual control of the senses. A *brahmachari* must needs control his palate. He must eat to live and not for enjoyment. He must see only clean things and close his eyes before anything unclean. It is thus a sign of polite breeding to walk with one's eyes towards the ground and not wandering about from object to object. A *brahmachari* will likewise hear nothing obscene or unclean, smell no strong, stimulating things. The smell of clean earth is far sweeter than the fragrance of artificial scents and essences. Let the aspirant to *brahmacharya* also keep his hands and feet engaged in all waking hours in healthful activity. Let him also fast occasionally.

The third step is to have clean companions — clean friends and clean books.

The last and not the least is prayer. Let him repeat *Ramanama* with all his heart regularly everyday, and ask for divine grace.

None of these things are difficult for an average man or woman. They are simplicity itself. But their very simplicity is embarrassing. Where there is a will, the way is simple enough. Men have not the will for it and hence vainly grope. The fact that the world rests on the observance, more or less, of *brahmacharya* or restraint means that it is necessary and practicable."

If we add what Gandhiji repeatedly mentions elsewhere on the need of controlling one's thoughts and of arranging for a chaste environment, we would have his full code of rules making continence possible.

What is quoted above and was culled among many other like passages in Gandhiji's writings suffices to justify the

claim that as a national leader he stands unique in his advocacy of continence in and out of marriage. Nobody who invokes his name or claims to be a disciple of his in any way can countenance any proposal of artificial birth-control or any propaganda to that effect. Let all take heed of his warnings which he summarised in borrowing the last words of Paul Bureau's book 'Towards Moral Bankruptcy'; "The future is for the nations that are chaste."

A. Lallemand



Medical Opinion on Birth Control

By profession, a doctor is on the side of life—to help, save, promote and better it. He is no more entitled to take it than any other citizen is, whether the life in question be that of a week-old conceived or a suffering incurable.

We take up here the subject of birth control to propagate which much money is being spent in the distribution of free literature, in intensive propaganda, in clinics staffed by qualified medical men and women to give free advice to the public in the use of contraceptives. What is the reason for the rapid spread of birth control in our own India in the last few years? The grandmothers and mothers of the present women of child-bearing age have families of six, eight, even ten children. May be they lost a child or two, but then babies and infants still lose their lives! Their health was certainly better than ours is. They live long enough to see their grandchildren, sometimes even a couple great-grandchildren. Why this sudden trend to limiting a family to one, may be two children? There has been in the past few years a sharp rise in the population of our country, not only due to large families but also to an influx of a large number

of refugees, creating grave stress in the housing, food and financial situations. Poverty, over-crowding, poor sanitation, insufficient nourishment, ignorance and lack of medical attention has created an ideal medium for the advocates of birth control. But is it truly birth control which will solve these problems?

Birth control, we are told, is aimed at safeguarding the health, the dignity and the very life of women who are involved in pregnancies too frequent and not desired. But almost all of us can remember grandmothers and mothers whose health gave the lie to this claim. And what is there noble and dignified about a furtive visit to a drugstore to buy a contraceptive? A couple of us lady doctors had a rather embarrassing experience lately. We asked the salesman in a drugstore for a 'Hodges' Pessary, which is a vulcanite gadget used in the treatment of uterine displacements. Instead of serving us, he put on a most peculiar smile and told us we would have to come inside. His sole knowledge of a pessary was a contraceptive. It had been a national custom that women who had large families, and had lived to see their grand-children used to help safeguard the lives of their own daughters involved in frequent pregnancies. The usual interval between two children was about $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 years, particularly so when a mother breast-fed her infant. It is certainly possible to conceive earlier, but consideration on the part of the husband usually took care of that. "Not desired" is not as popular with women as we might imagine. Even today, there are women with five and six children who call on the doctor if they have not conceived again, in a couple of years, to find out the reason why. Birth Control has not touched women yet.

Birth Control champions have yet another medical argument. They maintain that birth control will also have the effect of diminishing infant mortality, so high in large families, and which is everywhere the result of a high birth rate. Now, there have been statistics taken of birth and death rates for as long as we know, but the reason for high

death rates was never laid at the "large family" door. With greatly improved medical knowledge, we are able to lower the incidence, and therefore the mortality in such dreaded diseases as infantile gastro-enteritis. Ante-natal care of the mother is now not something to be forced on the public. Women are fast learning to show themselves well in time to the doctor to safeguard their own lives and that of their expected children. Most women go to the hospital for their confinement. There are also trained nurses and health workers whose duty is to go from house to house and teach people better ways of caring for and bringing up their babies. It is overcrowded homes, bad hygiene, poor food and often the lack of it, that have to be overcome; for it is this, not the number of children, that causes the relatively high rate of mortality in large families. The lowest mortality rate would be seen of course among the upper classes, among whom birth prevention is most practised. So the statistics shown in birth control literature would hardly be the correct picture, when both classes are covered together. We have yet to start investigations in our own country. And we forget an important cause for a high infant mortality — syphilis. This disease can bring about abortions, mis-carriages, and still-births. Fighting poverty and disease would serve us better than birth-control, as doctors all over the world have claimed.

Maternity is not a disease, as some modern amateurs seem to imply; it is a vital experience which needs proper caution and calls for efficient medical attention, at ante-natal clinics where mother and the unborn child are taken care of. The money spent in spreading knowledge of birth prevention, would it not be better used for more and better hospitals, ante-natal clinics and infant-welfare centres? Where maternal mortality could be further reduced by suitable preventive measures for the cure of intercurrent diseases? The risks of taxaeemias, of pregnancy, of puerperal infection are known to diminish after the first child. Maternity is a normal physiological function in women, the natural end

of the sexual cycle, and is necessary for the health of her body and mind. The regular use of contraceptives often brings about sterility and neuroses in women.

May I quote the opinions of three gynaecologists, eminent men on the Continent on this subject of birth control?

"Almost all preventive methods involve certain danger to the health of the woman, which is not to be neglected. Nature cannot be fooled : the continual unproductive stimulation of the genital organs is apt to give the woman chronic pelvic disorder, and often renders her sterile".... (*Prof. Selheim*)

"It had been shown irrefutably that, quite apart from the danger of infection all contraceptive methods are of such a kind as to damage the health of those who make use of them.".... (*Dr. Max Marcuse*)

"An ideal method of contraception, one that is of absolute efficacy and not productive of discomfort, disturbance or damage to health does not exist and cannot exist.".... (*Dr. Van de Vilde*)

These opinions are the more valuable because they are the opinions of doctors who to some extent are advocates of contraception.

Contraceptive practices are physically harmful. As the use of contraceptives is directed towards preventing all access of the spermatic fluid to the uterine cavity there is no absorption of the fluid in the woman's system. This endocrine deficiency is harmful, as is seen from the necessity of giving spermatic extracts to women who have deprived themselves of it by conjugal fraud. Continued irritation in any part of the body must cause chronic inflammation. So continued irritation of the pelvic organs must cause chronic pelvic disease. Many women practise contraception at the beginning of their married lives. Every gynaecologist meets them when they have decided to have a child and find they do not conceive. Sterility is the terrible price they have to pay. Then too, the incidence of erosions of the cervix and endocervicitis are definitely on the increase, and almost al-

ways a history of the use of contraceptives can be elicited. It has also been observed that cases of carcinoma of the cervix and uterus are more frequent in the last few years. But it is not possible to authoritatively link them with the use of contraceptives till further study has been done. Suffice it to say that clinically it has been observed that chronic irritation is one of the predisposing causes of cancer. In the case of the uterus but particularly of the cervix, strong anti-septic douchings, jellies, usually of a highly acid chemical, pessaries, caps or whatever the contraceptive used, frequently repeated, or the constant presence of foreign bodies, such as occlusive pessaries, provide such constant irritation. Carcinoma of the breast and womb are certainly more common in women without children.

When pregnancy is undesirable on medical or economic grounds, what is to be advised? Complete or partial continence is the answer. Complete continence is not advisable save in grave cases. But many are now using the "rhythm-theory" method of Ogino-Knaus which is based on a safe period. It has been proved that a woman can only conceive on or about the day she ovulates, and ovulation usually occurs between menstrual periods. To successfully carry out this method one must have medical instruction, know the rules and strictly keep them. Partial continence is not favoured by the advocates of birth control on the score that it is not natural — but then, what is natural about the use of contraceptives?

A few words on sterilisation. This is an operation — vasectomy on the male, salpingotomy on the female — which is intended to destroy the reproductive functions of the sexual glands. It is the correct treatment if it is required to remedy some disease the patient has, — such as removal of the uterus in carcinoma of the cervix. Sterilisation which only deprives a person of his or her sexual powers will surely increase immorality and venereal disease. Dr. Fernald followed up the marriages of mental defectives; a certain number of the children were found to

be psychopaths, but the majority of them were normal. However the problem of heredity is too complex for making any rules about the future type of population.

Dr. (Miss) Y. Lobo.



Population Policy for India

The term "population" connotes more than a mere counting of heads. It includes both a theory and a policy. Demography, the scientific basis for a population policy, seeks for an exact knowledge of the rate of growth or decrease of population in order to ascertain the causes that govern such growth or decrease. A working acquaintance with the varying elements that influence population growth or decline will enable men to control the propagation of the race. Such control is justified in view of the fact that men are not atoms among a crowd of unrelated atoms, but rather cells in a compact organic body, where the good of the whole is just as important as the good of each cell. Nor is there anything immoral in the notion of population control, provided the means used to attain the desired end are strictly honest and do not violate the natural law.

The science of demography is a very modern science. Though it has aroused much interest of late, it cannot be called an exact science. For one thing, it is deeply dependent on exact statistics. Further it studies the impact of social institutions, like the family, the state, caste, the mores of the people, upon population. It takes account of economic factors, like the production and distribution of wealth and the standard of living of the people in relation to their number. Much spade work has still to be done along all these lines, before an appeal can be made to any strict scientific conclusions as a guide to population policy.

Despite this fact, in our India of today, we are asked to be scared by the bogey of "over-population". What is over-population? The term is really a relative one and can only be understood by reference to its correlative terms "under-population" and the "optimum population" or the "optimum density of population". Every inhabited country here and now is capable of supporting a certain number of people at a certain human standard of living, in conditions of a given level of productive activity. If by an increase of population the average standard of living rises, or in other words, the "real wages" of the workman increase, then that country can be said to have been under-populated. If on the contrary, with the increase of population, the standard of living falls per head of population, or real wages fall, it may be assumed that over-population has set in. This only shows that at every particular level of productive activity, a country can support a certain specific density of population in which the standard of living is highest for every single individual. This is known as the "Optimum Density of Population."

As theory, this is excellent. In practice, over-population in a country is roughly calculated by applying the characteristic indices. A steady fall in the standard of living of the poorer classes or working men is assumed to be a clear index of over-population. A high birth-rate and a high death-rate point in the same direction. On the other hand, it is admitted by all economists that unemployment is not due to over-population, but rather to the cyclic movement of Trade. India is said to be over-populated precisely because the standard of living is falling; there is not enough of food to go round to feed 362 millions; high birth and mortality rates are prevalent.

When the standard of living rises even though the population increases, under-population is clearly indicated. The Optimum is reached just before real wages begin to fall. This happened in Britain in 1900, after which year real wages began to fall and have been falling ever since. Obviously the optimum density is intimately connected

with technological improvements in productive capacity and will vary accordingly. Every improvement will raise the Optimum until the point of Diminishing Returns is reached.

The increase of population is measured by comparison of births and deaths per thousand of the population over a year. If the birth-rate is higher than the death-rate, it is evident that the population is increasing. But this index is unreliable, because both birth and death rates might be lowered by contraceptive methods and by improvements in medical science, and yet the population while apparently increasing may in reality be declining.

The rate of population growth is measured by the number of women between the ages of 15 and 40, and the number of births per thousand such women, i.e., their fertility rate. Even more important is the number of girl children born to women of child-bearing age. The future population of the country hinges on this all important factor. As population policy is more concerned with the future than with the present, it is the net reproduction rate that chiefly matters. The net reproduction rate is made up of the number of girl children born per thousand child-bearing women, who are likely to survive their births so as in their turn to become mothers of children. How does the net reproduction rate help us to foresee the future trends of population? Very simply: if 100 child-bearing women are replaced by 100 girl babies, the net reproduction is 1. If however 100 child-bearing women are replaced by 125 girl babies, the net reproduction rate rises to 1.25. Conversely if for 100 child-bearing women only 75 babies survive, then the rate falls to .75. The first example shows that the population is stationary; the second that the population is increasing, the third that the population is diminishing.

Now the net reproduction rate for India is unknown. The trouble with the country is that our statistics are meagre, misleading and often incorrect. And yet this figure is absolutely necessary to guide our population planners.

The Population Planning Commission has realised this, and has tried to calculate an approximate rate by comparison with Japanese population figures. After much confusing calculation, the final figure arrived at by them is 1·454, which indicated the Indian net reproduction rate. In simpler words, every 1,000 Indian mothers are replaced by 1,454 future mothers in the space of a single generation. This means that in a period of 30 years—the life of a generation—the female population of India is expected to increase by little less than half its present strength. Thus, according to the Commission in 1931, the total population of India and Pakistan was 353 millions in 1961, the population will stand at 513 millions, if fertility and mortality rates remain constant. Thus an increase of 160 millions is predicted by the Planning Commission. In his "Population of India and Pakistan", Kingsley Davis hazards a guess that the net reproduction rate is round about 1·30, and the population in 1970 will reach 525 millions. But he adds a note of caution. He quite realises how dynamic modern conditions are, and how technological changes might effect the population for better or worse.

What conclusions are we expected to draw from this array of big figures? Undoubtedly that India is over-populated, say the vast majority of Indian economists, and the Census authorities of 1931 openly endorse this conclusion. But does this facade of statistics and figures mean anything? It can be admitted that it means one thing; that the population is increasing, and will continue to increase if the same birth rates and mortality rates persist. But it does not prove anything more. It does not prove for instance that India is frightfully over-populated. The grinding poverty of the people might be traced to our inefficient methods of agriculture, the mal-distribution of food grains, the apathy of the administration, and the paucity of communications. Even the Census authorities in 1931, plainly admit that India can easily support a much larger population on her agricultural and industrial resources, if they

were properly exploited. The *per capita* income of India is over Rs. 200 today, and had we not had our difficulties due to the partition of the country, the failure of the monsoons, the Assam earthquake, corruption, black-marketing, the inertia of our public officials and the inexperience of a new government, our material welfare measured in terms of commodities might well have been higher than that of 1939.

But to throw the whole blame of all our economic and social ills on "over-population" is a fantastic piece of propaganda that owes its origin to a rigid belief in the outdated myth of Malthus and the hidden desire to imitate the "progressive" West. Instead of any ample scientific data on which to base their case for the wide diffusion of contraceptive methods, an emotional appeal to the misery and the poverty of India seems to be the chief argument of our population planners for a dogmatic assertion that the country is over-populated and that birth-control must be introduced at once. No account is taken of the innate dishonesty of the means itself and the immorality that follows in the wake of such a practice. No consideration is paid to the traditional Indian respect for family life, and for cultural values. All that seems to bother the population planners is the lack of food to feed the millions. If food is the real problem, then an increase of the food supply is the obvious solution, not the diminution of the race by unnatural methods.

Most of our publicists gloss over the fact that the West is already bitterly regretting the advocacy of birth-control. Take the case of England. The practice of contraception has affected the birth-rate so severely, that the population is dwindling by 25% in every generation. In other words, every 100 child-bearing women in England are producing not 100 girl babies but only 75. The age distribution of the population is already taking on a lop-sided aspect ; the number of old people above the age of 45 is increasing ; while the number of babies and the number of people between 15 and 45 is decreasing. Graphically represented, this would

mean that whereas before the population pyramid stood on its base, with the number of babies and adults between the ages of 15 to 45 years predominating, today the pyramid seems to stand on its apex, upside down, with few young people and a rapidly increasing number of old people. This is no private opinion of a minority of population statisticians in Britain, but that of Sir W. Beveridge, the planner of Britain's Welfare State. He is quoted in the *Times*, 11th February 1937, as saying, "In Britain today, the total population was still increasing slowly, but that was a temporary phenomenon due to high birth-rates a generation ago, bringing it about that at the moment we had more than the usual proportion of people in the prime of life. But the "net reproduction rate" of the only people that mattered—the women between 15 and 50—was well below unity. It was 0·75. That meant that for every 100 potential mothers of the present generation there would be only 75 in the next generation, and that, if fertility and mortality remained unchanged in the generation after, the 75 would become 56—a quarter of the population would disappear in each generation. If that went on, in 100 years' time the population of England would be 20 million, and in 200 years' time just five million. This meant simply that unless fertility, that was to say, the number of girl babies born in relation to mothers that could bear them, changed, unless mortality, that was to say, the deaths of girls and women under 50, changed the population of England some years from now would begin to fall by a quarter in each generation and in due course would become extinct. Fertility might change, and there was no factor which must be tending to make it less, nor more. *The decline of births was due, in the main, to design, to what was known as birth-control.* Increasing knowledge of and application of birth-control would almost certainly lower fertility still further, if nothing else changed."

Comparing the case of India with that of Britain, we can at least say that though we are ignorant of the net reproduction rate, the recent decennial increase by 13% as

given by the Census Commission of 1951 affords some ground of argument. The point is that between the years 1861 to 1871 the population of England and Wales actually rose by a similar percentage. By 1876, however, the Neo-Malthusians had bluffed the educated classes by means of the "over-population" bogey into the use of contraceptive methods. The fall in the birth-rate started in that eventful year, when the trial of Mrs. Besant and Mr. Bradlaugh raised a storm in England. The prosecution was a very fine piece of propaganda in their favour. Ever since, the birth-rate has been declining, though the population on the whole went on increasing, and almost doubled itself in 1911—so deceitful and elusive are mere numbers. Today the population is said to be stationary but is really on the decline to the dismay of English political leaders who now realise the potential dangers of contraceptive methods, when it is too late.

The picture in France is much worse. General De Gaulle recently pleaded for an increase of 12 million in the population. As a matter of fact, the birth-rate in France has improved slightly, but this is due rather to immigration than to a change of mind in the French people. Men are not machines that can be controlled by pressing a button. They are creatures of flesh and blood, deeply instinctive, yet gifted with the potencies of intelligence and free activity. But the forces of routine, tradition and habit play a large part in determining their free activity, and once a man falls captive to his lustful instincts and can have the pleasure of the sexual act without its natural consequences by the use of contraceptives no amount of persuasion for the common good is going to break a habit that has become deeply rooted by the passage of years. It is all very well for Dr. Chandrasekhar to write with a wave of his pen of the immediate response for more babies in the U. S. during World War II. America is still bothered over the fall in the national birth-rate. The fact is that contraceptives induce sterility in the female.

The policy of population planners in the West is definitely towards an increase of numbers. Family allowances, housing, increase of wages, public propaganda are all directed towards stemming the decline of numbers among the white races. But in India, where we always seem to lag a generation behind the West in everything we do or advocate, our wise men counsel the large-scale use of contraceptives. Are we to clap our hands, or weep?

Does this mean that we must sit back with folded hands and watch the population take care of itself? Before we speak of rational control of population, it must be noticed that Nature has a means of her own for controlling excessive manifestations of the germ plasm. It is now becoming evident that there exists "an inverse ratio between fertility and the chances of survival which is found in all species both animal and vegetable". The more comfortable the environment, the less fertile does the species become; the keener the struggle for existence, the more fertile is the species. In 1837, Thomas Doubleday formulated this observation into a law. Sutherland in his "Control of Life", relates the law in these terms: "Under conditions of hardship the birth-rate tends to rise; in circumstances of ease, the birth-rate tends to fall." The working of the law is revealed in the following ingenuous experiment of Prof. Pearl, as described by Sutherland in his *Laws of Life*, p. 214. "He took a number of milk bottles of uniform size, each containing the same amount of banana substance as food for the flies. In the first bottle he placed one pair of mated flies; into the second, two pairs, and so on, until he had a bottle into which fifty pairs of mated flies were introduced. The population of flies in each bottle was counted from day to day, and the results were amazing. The relative fertility of the single pair of flies was highest of all, over twenty-one offspring per day per female. Moreover the fertility of the flies progressively declined as the number of flies originally introduced into the bottles increased. In the bottle originally containing fifty mated flies, the fertility was less than one offspring per day per female. He attri-

butes these results not to lack of the food supply, but to the density of population."

There are not many people who believe in such a control of fertility by nature. For the majority, the decline in the birth-rate is brought about solely by birth-control methods and Malthusian checks. To counter such a belief, Sutherland cites the case of the English nobility, who are anxious to have heirs and yet many of whom are sterile. And he goes on to remark in his *Control of Life* (page 162) : "On all the evidence it is clear that Nature's most stupendous act — the reproduction of the species — is governed by a vast and complex force of which we know very little, but we do know from the history of dead nations that when men and women seek to sabotage that force by artificial means its vengeance is implacable. By improved social conditions birth-rates fall of their own accord, but by the added use of contraceptives that natural fall will be so aggravated as to cause national extinction". We are still only on the threshold of any complete scientific theory of population. Till we possess one, who can dare lay down a policy for the control of the propagation of the race ? Instead let us learn from the experience of those nations who have already tried to implement such a policy.

While a national policy is still unadvisable, this does not preclude individuals from exercising a rational control over the increase of their own families. When economic circumstances or weak health make a new addition to the family out of the question, family planning becomes a necessity. There is nothing wrong in thus desiring to control any expansion of the population in a rational manner. But such control must be made to work within the limits of the natural law. Family planning so long as it implies the use of continence, self-control, late marriage, has much to commend it. For in the final analysis it really means that even in the propagation of the race, a rational use of the reproductive faculty is being secured. Indeed it is reason alone that distinguishes man from the brute ; and nowhere does

a man rise superior to his animal nature more than in his control of his sexual appetites.

A. Fonseca.



Summary & Conclusions

1. We may, to begin with, admit that there is a population problem in India—a qualitative and quantitative problem. The diseased, the under-developed, the defective child is not wanted. Then there are certain regions in India where the population is reaching, if it has not already reached, "saturation point". And taking the country as a whole our resources in food and other material goods necessary for decent life, *at the present stage of their development*, are not adequate for the population.

2. To limit this population by artificial birth-control by the use of contraceptives and by sterilization of healthy persons carried out solely for preventing the birth of children is immoral and must be condemned. Birth-control methods are also harmful to health and will not produce the better type which some of its protagonists claim.

3. There are certain ways by which nature herself keeps down excessive growth in population. There are general causes that diminish fertility in given peoples and races. Thanks for all individuals, there are periods when conception is unlikely. It is legitimate to use this "safe period". In certain cases of disease, operations necessary for preservation of life may also indirectly cause sterilization. The Moral Law does not condemn sterilization of this kind.

4. We must however admit that after making full allowance for these natural methods, there will be still "hard cases", medical and economic, where avoidance of children may be desirable. There is no solution for these cases except the one of self-control and abstinence. It is idle to say that self-control or abstinence is impossible. Like

many other duties, it is difficult. But thousands of men and women live with total abstinence from sexual pleasure. Restraint in married life is surely possible and in any case absolutely indispensable in certain conditions.

5. The birth of defective children is not to be avoided by contraceptives or sterilization but by improving the general health. Much of this can be done simply by better sanitation and a keener social sense regarding community cleanliness. Moreover the avoidance of early marriage, and postponement till the physical condition of the parents is suited to child-bearing will keep down the growth of population and improve the physique of the children. A general raising of the age of marriage for boys and girls is one of the urgent social reforms in India. Total suppression of Polygamy is also necessary.

6. Again, a general raising of the standard of life, and an abundance of healthy recreation for young people has always helped to lower the birth-rate naturally. In India increased facilities for women, as regard recreation, social and public activity, economic openings, will undoubtedly check the growth of population. Thousands would willingly remain unmarried if they could find suitable work or opportunities for service.

7. The food problem is real but it is not to be solved by keeping down the population but by increasing of food stocks. Chesterton's humorous way of expressing this contained a profound truth : "When you have eight men and four hats, you do not cut off four heads but get four more hats." In other words, you do not produce a population to suit your food, you produce food to meet the needs of your population. This is possible by more extensive and more intensive cultivation.

8. Moreover, too much emphasis has been laid on "self-sufficiency" in food. Possibly we can become self-sufficient in food. But there is no reason why we should necessarily be that. Some of the most prosperous and progressive nations in the world need imports of food. What is neces-

sary is that we should not be impoverished by an unfavourable trade balance. We can secure a favourable trade balance even if we buy a good deal of food from foreign countries, provided we buy fewer manufactured goods and sell more of our surplus goods. There is an immense future for large-scale as well as cottage industries in our land. We shall not promote them by cutting down the families of the enterprising hard working classes.

9. There is need and possibility of internal migration in India. The surplus population of certain over-crowded areas can and must migrate to sparsely populated areas in the same region or other provinces. Provincial and parochial jealousies sometimes stand in the way of these migrations and settlements. Hence planning and negotiations by State Governments are necessary.

10. And lastly, this question of excess population should not be considered in an isolated way by each nation. It should be studied in the light of world conditions. Can the world, as a whole, sustain this and a much greater population ? Undoubtedly it can. There are vast areas unpopulated or thinly populated waiting for vigorous and fertile peoples to occupy them. It is true that selfish national policies prevent the movement of peoples. But India does believe in "one world". She strives for international peace, and the evolution of the world towards some form of world government. The claims of the prolific races to people the vacant spaces of the world cannot in the long run be resisted. If we grow as we should, a great future beyond the seas awaits our people in lands actually vacant, or peopled by dwindling races whose selfishness and love of pleasure will slowly kill them off. If we believe in the qualities of our race,—their love of peace, their industry, their fidelity to family ties, their devotion to religious ideals,—if we believe that these qualities will make for peace and harmony in the world, then we must welcome this prospect of our expansion beyond our land, and not arrest the movement by limiting our population by illicit and harmful methods.

J. D'S.

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